

**BRIEF SUMMARY FINAL REGULATIONS
REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC
SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA
8 VAC 20-131 et. seq.
Adopted by the Board of Education
July 28, 2000**

The primary objectives of the Board of Education in revising the standards were to reaffirm the Board's commitment to the standards adopted in 1997 and to define a system of consequences and rewards for students, professional personnel, schools, and school divisions. Student achievement on SOL tests will continue to be used as the primary basis of evaluating schools. Funding for the staffing levels is provided through state basic aid to support the requirements of the Standards of Quality.

In this revision, the goals were to address:

1. Further refinement of student-level consequences related to the testing program and the impact of such changes on the school's overall accreditation rating;
2. Refinement of the new accreditation ratings; and
3. Further refinement and clarification of language inconsistencies in the current regulations.
4. Flexibility and fairness for students and schools but holding firm to high standards.

Significant to the final regulations are the following:

1. A mechanism was established to allow tests such as Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) to be used with Standards of Learning (SOL) tests for earning verified credits for high school graduation at a student's option. Results on these tests also would count in the school's pass rates for accreditation purposes.
2. A transition period from 2000-01 through 2002-03 (students in grades 7, 8, and 9 in fall 2000) during which they will have to pass six SOL tests to graduate: two in English and four of their choosing. This flexibility is being allowed since these students have not had the benefit of the Standards of Learning for their entire school careers.
3. A new diploma, the Modified Standard Diploma, was created for certain students with disabilities who are unlikely to meet the requirements for a Standard Diploma but may achieve above the level of the Special Diploma.
4. A school may institute a remediation recovery program that has been established by the Board in English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics to allow a student who is not retained in grade and who has not previously passed the related SOL test(s) to receive additional instruction and to retake the SOL test(s).
5. Students in grades K-8 may participate in a remediation recovery program for English (Reading, Literature, and Research), mathematics, or both. In grades 9-12, the remediation recovery program includes opportunities to retake the end-of-course SOL

mathematics tests and the eighth-grade English (Reading, Literature, and Research) and mathematics SOL tests. Schools receive "bonus points" for their pass rates when students are successful in this program.

6. A series of intermediate annual benchmarks for SOL test pass rates in the four core academic areas of English, math, science and history/social studies between 2000-01 and the end of the 2003-04 academic year that clearly define the expected progress of schools were established. These benchmarks would increase each year in a "stairstep" approach. Schools that have student pass rates at or above these annual benchmarks will be "Provisionally Accredited."
7. A new accreditation sub-category, "Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement", was created for schools that do not reach the annual benchmarks, but which are within 20 percentage points of the benchmarks for use between now and the end of the 2002-2003 academic year. Schools that are 20 or more percentage points below the annual benchmarks will be "Accredited with Warning in (specified academic area or areas)."
8. The third-grade science and history/social science test scores will not be used to calculate accreditation ratings during the period from 2000-01 through 2002-03. The third grade scores may be used by combining them with the fifth-grade science and history/social science scores if they will benefit the school.
9. The pass rate in third- and fifth-grade English required for schools to be rated "Fully Accredited" will be 75 percent beginning in 2003-04.
10. An "Academic Review" of each school that is "Accredited with Warning" will be conducted by an individual or a team supervised by the Department of Education. This academic review will focus on whether the school has aligned its curriculum with the SOL, whether the daily class schedule could be restructured to devote more time to academic areas of weakness, whether student achievement data are being used effectively to target areas of weakness, and whether staff development resources are being used efficiently to improve areas of weakness. This academic review report would become a key document in both the development of the school's improvement plan and later evaluations of the school for remedial actions, should the school fail to achieve accreditation on schedule.
11. Each school "Accredited with Warning" must file an annual report with the state detailing its progress in implementing its School Improvement Plan. Together with the report of the baseline academic review, these reports will form a record of the school's improvement efforts that will be important in evaluating the school should it fail to achieve accreditation by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year.
12. Beginning immediately, accreditation will be determined by using a three-year rolling average of student pass rates or the current year's scores, whichever is greater. Additionally, the scores of transfer students and students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) will be used in calculating of the accreditation rating of a school if those scores benefit the school.

These regulations will become effective at the close of a final 30-day review period that begins August 28 and ends September 28. Questions and comments should be directed to the Office of Accreditation at (804) 786-9421.